

Elevating Education-System Employee Wellness

March 2026 Wellness Newsletter

ODE's [School Wellness, Inclusion Safety & Health Unit](#) features a monthly article in the Education Update to foster a culture of belonging and wellness for Oregon's Education System Employees. This month we will learn about mindfulness, amazing work happening in North Coast ESD, and data about educator belonging from Oregon's Elevating Voices in Education workforce survey (EVE).

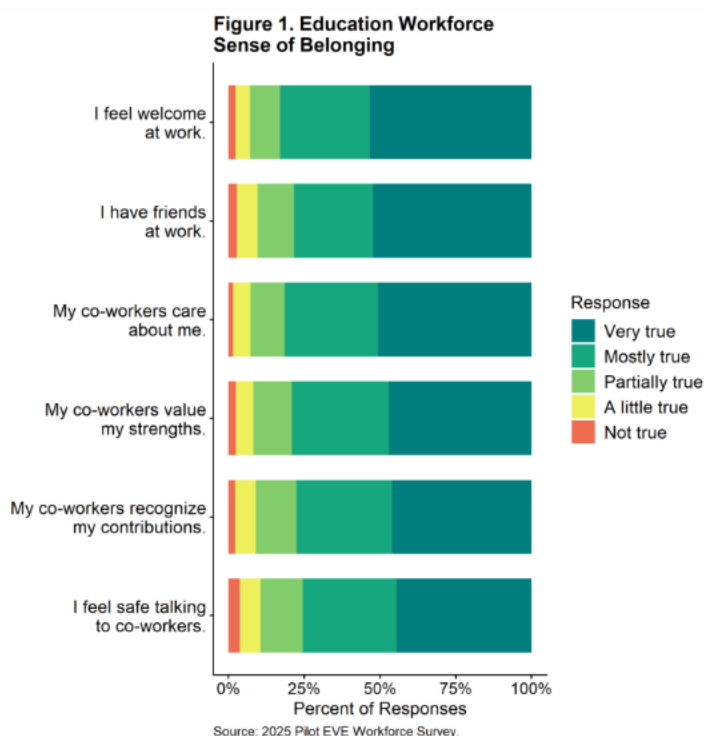
Mindfulness is a tool that can be used when you feel like you are crashing through the waves of everyday life with a sense of overwhelm and stress and can serve as the world's tiniest survival kit when other options are out of reach. Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from intentionally paying attention. When practicing mindfulness you shift, you are focused on the present, the now. The way the floor feels under your feet, the distant sound of traffic, birds, or the wild symphony of students in the hallway. This form of mindfulness practice is called open awareness and requires only that you notice things like thoughts, sounds, scents, feelings as they come and go. Focused attention is another type of mindfulness practice and uses a single point of focus like a chime or an inhale through the nose. When we pair the intention with breath, it sends signals to our brain and body to slow down. It can be helpful if we have had to ignore signals from our bodies because there isn't time for a bio break, snack etc. If you are curious to learn more, you can practice on your own, with others (a staff meeting?!) or use an app like CALM, Headspace and [insight timer](#) and [smiling mind](#) are free. As a parting gift please enjoy "[Just Breathe](#)" from Mindful Schools- it offers insights from children, a tiny bit of brain science and encourages the use of mindfulness practices. I hope it brings even a feeling sense of calm.

ESD Spotlight: North Central Education Service District (NCESD), located in Condon, Oregon, is working hard to provide diverse opportunities for staff to engage in wellness and community building. NCESD hosts a monthly book group to study and discuss the book *Teach from Your Best Self*, which explores strategies to help educators thrive in their classrooms, bring out the best in their students and build connection. Author Jay Schroder will be joining this month's book study to facilitate a book discussion on how to embed emotional resilience tools into the workday.

The ESD is also partnering with the Columbia Regional Educator Network, Oregon Well-Being Trust and community partners to host an upcoming well-being summit for ESD and component district staff to connect and explore personal and professional

well-being resources. Utilizing funds from the Community Event Support benefit from Oregon Well-Being Trust, NCESD offered massages at their Summer Learning Institute to help educators decompress and ground themselves to be ready for professional learning.

Oregon's Education Workforce Sense of Belonging



ODE's [Shared Accountability Framework](#) identifies **Committed and Supported Staff** as a key priority for student success. Central to this priority is a **sense of belonging**, or the experience of feeling welcomed, valued, cared for, and respected at work. Belonging is a fundamental human need and motivation, and has a significant impact on our health and wellbeing ([Allen et al., 2021](#); [Baumeister et al., 1995](#)). Within a workplace setting, it also plays a role in job satisfaction, management of workplace stress, and staff retention ([Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011](#)). In support of

ODE's accountability framework and [Strategic Plan](#), ODE administers the [Elevating Voices in Education \(EVE\) Workforce Survey](#) which focuses on the workplace experiences and perceptions of Oregon's public K-12 education workforce (i.e., part-time, full-time, and contract licensed and classified employees). The 2025 Pilot EVE Workforce Survey included six sense of belonging items.

Figure 1 displays the distribution of responses by each sense of belonging item. We observe that at least 75% of participants responded with *Mostly or Very true* for each item, suggesting that the majority of Oregon's education workforce who participated in the survey had a high sense of belonging at work. While this is promising and worthy of celebration, we acknowledge there are opportunities for improvement across Oregon given that 17 to 25 percent of participants had a low to moderate sense of belonging.

As part of ODE's accountability framework and strategic plan, we intend to further explore how sense of belonging varies within and across Oregon, and how it connects to job satisfaction, workplace stress, staff retention, and other relevant outcomes. Moreover, for the 2026 EVE Workforce Survey, we added three new sense of belonging

items, including an open-ended item asking participants to share what fosters their sense of belonging at work.

The 2026 EVE Workplace Survey is currently open and will close on March 31st. We encourage all members of Oregon's public K-12 education workforce to participate and share their voice, experience, and story with us. Please follow this [link](#) to access the survey. For questions or more information about the EVE Workforce Survey, please contact: ODE.edstaffsurvey@ode.oregon.gov.